# AN UPDATE ON THE

# MIDTOWN CULTURAL DISTRICT

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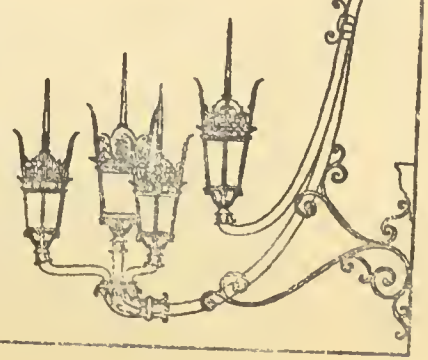

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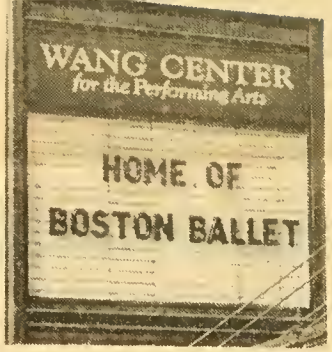

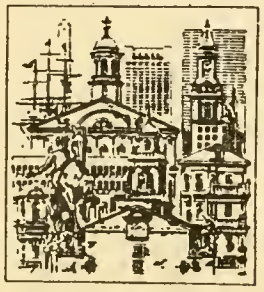

**A PLAN TO MANAGE GROWTH**

**CITY OF BOSTON**
**RAYMOND L. FLYNN**
***MAYOR***

**OFFICE OF ARTS & HUMANITIES**
**BRUCE ROSSLEY**
**COMMISSIONER**

MIDTOWN CULTURAL DISTRICT PLAN
KRISTEN J. McCORMACK
*DIRECTOR*

**BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**
STEPHEN COYLE
*Director*

ROBERT L. FARRELL
*Chairman*
JOSEPH J. WALSH
*Vice-Chairman*
JAMES K. FLAHERTY
*Treasurer*
CLARENCE J. JONES
*Vice-Treasurer*
MICHAEL F. DONLAN
*Vice-Chairman Sub-Committees*
KANE SIMONIAN
*Secretary*

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## A letter from Mayor Ray Flynn

The Midtown Cultural District Plan offers us a rare opportunity to bring together all those elements which best reflect the diversity, vitality and appeal of the City of Boston. I view this plan as one of the most important downtown planning initiatives in the City of this decade.

Fighting for what we believe in is one of Boston's proudest traditions. It's part of building a city, building a hometown where our kids can grow up free of fear, and where the schools are giving them tools for the future.

It's part of building a city where the arts are vibrant and accessible to all: where there's affordable housing for working families; and where a strong economy continues to grow and to open its doors to people who've never known anything but having those doors slammed in their faces. Ultimately, the revitalization of the Midtown Cultural District will create a new neighborhood of offices, homes, stores, restaurants, hotels and cultural facilities and will help preserve our historic Chinatown neighborhood.

This plan provides those benefits essential to a growing economy and a stable neighborhood including job training programs, affordable housing and new child care facilities. This plan reflects the hopes and concerns of people who care deeply about the future of Boston.

This is my vision for Boston. Not just for some. But for everyone.

## Midtown Cultural District Zoning Plan

The Midtown Cultural District Plan outlines a balanced program of growth that will create a new downtown community of residences, businesses and cultural facilities. Central to the plan is the creation of 10 new theaters to begin to meet the shortage of appropriate space for the city's performing arts groups. The arts community, working through the Midtown Cultural District Task Force, has identified necessary theaters and galleries which will be shared by non-profit arts groups. The city is working with artists, community groups, and property owners to locate these facilities within the Cultural District.

> "When the Midtown Cultural District becomes a reality, Boston's superb small and midsized theatre, dance and music companies will finally be able to bring affordable cultural activities to the people of every neighborhood in our city."
>
> **Spiro Veloudos**
> **Artistic Director**
> **The Publik Theatre**

To preserve the existing concentration of theater structures and uses in the Midtown Cultural District, the zoning plan will prohibit the change or use of the existing theaters in the district. The use of an existing theater may only be changed under extreme circumstances as outlined in the zoning plan. As a condition to allowing a change of use, a new development on the lot that contained all or a portion of the theater will be required to provide replacement space for cultural uses.

The proposed Commonwealth Center project will provide an historic renovation of the Paramount Theater for use as a dance theater and will create a flexible use dramatic theater as well.

New zoning for the Midtown Cultural District will create a legal mechanism that implements many of the policies outlined in the Midtown Cultural District Plan. The zoning plan can be approved only after both the BRA and the city's Zoning Commission hold public hearings. The primary purposes of the zoning plan are:

- To direct the Downtown economy in a way that promotes balanced growth for Boston, by preventing overdevelopment of the Financial District and Back Bay commercial status;
- To revitalize Midtown as the region's center for the performing arts, by creating new cultural facilities and rehabilitating existing theaters;
- To protect and provide for expansion of thriving Chinatown neighborhood, by creating affordable housing and by controlling institutional expansion;
- To preserve the historic resources of the district by giving legal protection to more than 100 historic buildings;
- To create a new residential neighborhood downtown; and
- To support the ability of all Boston residents and working parents to participate in Boston's growth economy by creating day care facilities and job training programs.

The Midtown zoning plan sets the framework to achieve these purposes by establishing:

- **Three Planned Development Areas,** where large-scale private development is appropriate and will provide public benefits such as new and renovated theaters and affordable housing;
- **Four Protection Areas,** with strict height limits which encourage rehabilitation of the historic buildings within National Register and Register-eligible districts;

### PUBLIC BENEFITS OF THE PLAN

| | |
|---|---|
| JOBS LINKAGE | 5 MILLION |
| HOUSING LINKAGE | 25 MILLION |
| REAL ESTATE TAXES | 17 MILLION |
| CHILD CARE SPACES | 500 |
| NET NEW PERMANENT JOBS | 15,000 |
| CONSTRUCTION JOBS | 8,500 |

RENOVATION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS
RENOVATION AND RESTORATION OF CULTURAL FACILITIES
PROVISION OF NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

## Housing

To promote affordable housing, the Midtown Cultural District Zoning Plan introduces inclusionary zoning to the Boston Zoning Code. The zoning will create affordable housing through incentives consistent with recent Supreme Court decisions. Housing projects in areas which can accommodate a greater density of development will qualify for a density bonus of up to 20% if 10% of the dwelling units on-site are affordable, or if the project creates an amount of affordable units off-site equal to 20% of those in the proposed project. The affordable units must be equivalent in size, appearance, and quality to the market rate units.

## Child care

The future of the Midtown Cultural District economy will depend, to a large extent, on the ability of its employers to attract and retain qualified workers. The Midtown Cultural District Plan works to meet that challenge by requiring child care facilities be constructed in large-scale commercial projects.

Proposed projects will create child care or adult care facilities according to their site as follows:

| Project Size | Child Care Provision |
|---|---|
| 100,000-500,000 sq. ft. | 4,000 sq. ft. (one center) |
| 500,000-1,000,000 sq. ft. | 8,000 sq. ft. (two centers) |
| 1,000,000 + sq. ft. | 12,000 sq. ft. (three centers) |

An applicant for a proposed project must create a minimum of 4,000 sq. ft. on site. The remainder may be created off-site in the Midtown Cultural District, Chinatown, or Bay Village.

In this way, more Boston residents will be able to participate in the city's economy as it grows and employers will be able to attract and retain qualified employees.

> "The Midtown Cultural District Plan gives options to working parents . . . parents who want to be close to their children while at work."
>
> **Elaine Fersh**
> **Director**
> **Parents United for Child Care**

## Chinatown

In this plan there is the opportunity to improve the quality of life in nearby Chinatown, notably through the development of at least 500 new affordable housing units and provisions of neighborhood business opportunities.

Specifically the plan proposes to aid Chinatown's community based planning efforts by funding the construction of 800 units of housing (two thirds of them affordable), and directing job training funds and English as a Second Language programs to Chinatown residents.

The concurrent development of the Chinatown Community Plan and the Midtown Cultural District Plan together with respective permanent zoning amendments for the two neighborhoods serves both communities well, allowing for the joint development of a comprehensive transportation plan and encouraging neighborhood business expansion. In order to preserve and promote opportunities for business establishments from the Chinatown and South Cove neighborhoods, the zoning plan provides that major new developments take affirmative actions to create neighborhood business opportunities.

Already housing linkage funds are being directed toward the development of 261 units of affordable housing in Chinatown on Parcel R-3/R-3A at Washington and Oak St.

> "Affordable housing for Chinatown ensures the continuous growth of our neighborhood by bringing families closer together in their own community."
>
> **George Joe**
> **Director**
> **Chinatown Neighborhood Council**

## Preservation & Urban Design

The Midtown Cultural District represents the historic character and human scale which is truly Boston. A major objective of the Midtown Cultural District Plan is to set design parameters which, while allowing for design freedom, will enhance the district's historic architectural character.

The Midtown Cultural District contains downtown Boston's greatest concentration of significant historic buildings. The new Midtown Cultural District zoning regulations preserve the historic resources of the district by giving legal protection to more than 100 historic buildings.

The zoning plan establishes four Protection Areas with height limits generally below 155'. Protection areas include the Boston Common and Public Garden Protection Area, the Ladder Blocks/Washington Street Theater area, the Newspaper Row/Old South area, with building height limits of 125' and the Bay Village edge with a 85' permanent height limit.

In addition, new development in the district will contribute to the restoration and renovation of historic buildings. As a result of the 90 Tremont Street project, the historic Tremont Temple will be restored. The Evans House on Tremont Street, one of the last surviving commercial brownstones in the city, will be restored as part of the proposed Commonwealth Center project. Developers of projects within Planned Development Areas will help renovate existing theaters and designated landmarks.

> "For years there has been a lot of talk about revitalizing Midtown, one of Boston's most important districts. Now the plan is ready. Tough urban design and environmental guidelines will be a vital part of the plan. Development will compliment — not overwhelm the Midtown.
>
> **Homer Russell**
> **Director of Urban Design**
> **Boston Redevelopment Authority**

## Transportation

For Boston's economy to continue to enjoy balanced growth during the upcoming depression of the Central Artery and construction of the Third Harbor Tunnel, the Midtown Cultural District is the logical area in which to allow growth. The Financial District, which lies in the path of the Central Artery project, is already congested and cannot accommodate significant new growth.

The key to Midtown's attractiveness from a transportation management standpoint is its strategic location with respect to public transportation. All four subway lines cross Midtown (in a total of seven stops), heading north, south, east and west and serving as links to air and commuter rail facilities. South Station is one stop on the Red Line from the heart of Midtown, while North Station is a short ride on either the Green or Orange Lines. The Blue Line provides direct access to Logan Airport. In addition, a new Midtown subway line is proposed to enter from the south down Essex Street to South Station and the Fort Point Channel.

Midtown is also strategically located near the Southwest Expressway and the Massachusetts Turnpike. A new eastbound ramp on the Massachusetts Turnpike would steer traffic away from Chinatown and the Central Artery before causing back-ups. Aggressive parking and transportation management programs will also ensure that vehicular traffic moves smoothly in and around Midtown.

A broad based planning effort including adjacent neighborhoods, local businesses, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the City's Transportation Department, the Midtown Cultural Task Force Transportation Committee, chaired by Richard Concannon, and state agencies has been addressing transportation issues in the Midtown Cultural District. This coalition will lead to the organization of a Transportation Management Association. The Midtown Transportation Management Association will coordinate the transportation access policies in all large-scale projects. In response to recommendations of the Conservation Law Foundation, a non-profit environmental advocacy group, the Midtown Transportation Management Association will publicize and organize carpools and vanpools, provide references to private transit services, and sell passes for MBTA services and private transit services. In particular, the Transportation Management Association will address the following issues:

- **Three Right of Way Improvements** involving Essex St., Hayward Place and Avery Street.
- **Transit Service Improvements** including upgrading the Boylston Street station and building a new subway connection below grade for the Orange Line.
- **Transit Promotion** encouraging patrons of retail and cultural facilities, as well as employees in the District to use Public Transportation.
- **Pedestrian Paths and Thoroughfares** sensitive to the needs of surrounding neighborhood and visitors will be evaluated.
- The proposed Commonwealth Center project will provide reduced rate parking for patrons of retail and cultural facilities and Chinatown residents. Commonwealth Center will also encourage promotion of "T" pass subsidies among their employees and encourage employers to make flextime available to their employees.
- **Parking management** which achieves a successful balance between the use of public transportation and the adequate parking is necessary for new office space to remain competitive. The overall ratio of parking to office space is the same in Midtown as for the last four years' downtown office projects, for a balanced, comprehensive approach to parking management.

## Midtown Cultural District Task Force looks to the future

The Midtown Cultural District Plan is the first of eleven comprehensive permanent district plans which the Boston Redevelopment Authority has undertaken following the passage of the Downtown Interim Zoning Plan in September of 1987.

The Midtown Cultural District Task Force began as the Performing Arts Development Task Force and is now in its fourth year of operation. The Task Force held more than 100 meetings in 1988 to address issues of design and development, led by Judee Shupe; parking and transportation, led by Dick Concannon; cultural facilities, led by Dona Sommers and the creation of a permanent trust fund, led by Warren Smith. Larry Murray, Chairman of the Midtown Cultural District Task Force and Director of ARTS/Boston, Inc. states, "More than 200 people are members, representing a broad cross section of our diverse community. Their mandate is to help balance the different needs of a mixed use neighborhood to achieve a community that is growing and vibrant but livable".

The Task Force represents a variety of interests including historic preservation, open space, transportation and neighborhood concerns. There is also representation from the corporate, cultural and retail and real estate worlds. "While it is not always possible to achieve unanimity of opinion, I believe that we have all learned much about each other's needs," says Murray.

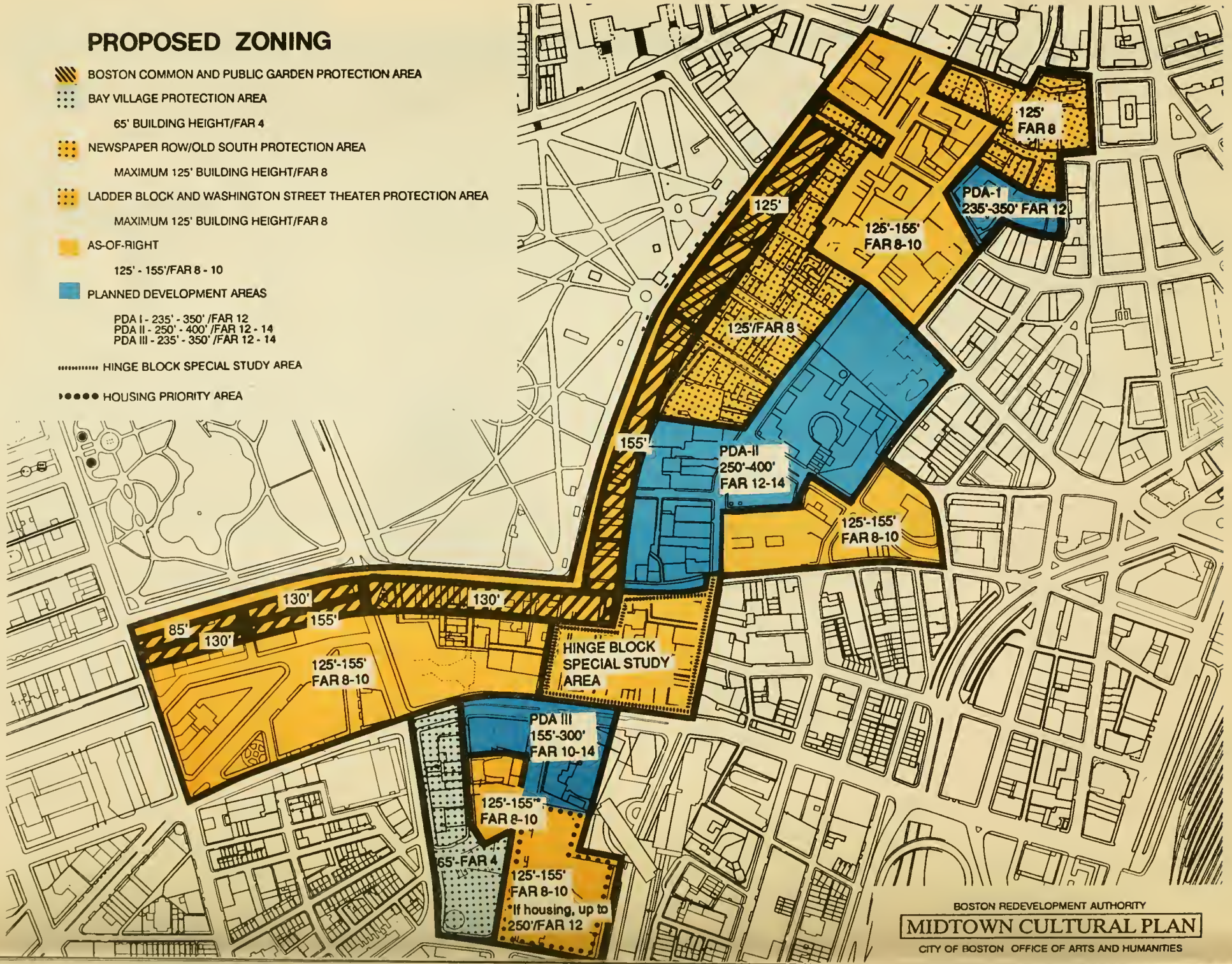
"We've come a long way in four years", adds Bruce Rossley, Comissioner of the City's Office of Arts and Humanities. The Midtown Cultural District Plan was not an easy victory. It required reaching out to and adopting the needs of communities beyond our own."

As an indication of where the Cultural District is headed Rossley points to the recent appointment of Kristen McCormack as Director of the Midtown Cultural District Development at the BRA. "The appointment of Kristen is an indication to everyone that we are moving forward and implementing the plan. She takes very seriously the concerns of each group with an interest in the district and is able to balance those concerns as the plan moves forward."

The Task Force welcomes additional participation and input. To be notified of upcoming meetings, please call 423-4454 and ask to be added to the Midtown Cultural District mailing list.

# PROPOSED ZONING

- BOSTON COMMON AND PUBLIC GARDEN PROTECTION AREA
- BAY VILLAGE PROTECTION AREA
  - 65' BUILDING HEIGHT/FAR 4
- NEWSPAPER ROW/OLD SOUTH PROTECTION AREA
  - MAXIMUM 125' BUILDING HEIGHT/FAR 8
- LADDER BLOCK AND WASHINGTON STREET THEATER PROTECTION AREA
  - MAXIMUM 125' BUILDING HEIGHT/FAR 8
- AS-OF-RIGHT
  - 125' - 155'/FAR 8 - 10
- PLANNED DEVELOPMENT AREAS
  - PDA I - 235' - 350' /FAR 12
  - PDA II - 250' - 400' /FAR 12 - 14
  - PDA III - 235' - 350' /FAR 12 - 14
- HINGE BLOCK SPECIAL STUDY AREA
- HOUSING PRIORITY AREA




BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

**MIDTOWN CULTURAL PLAN**

CITY OF BOSTON OFFICE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

## JOBS

**Jay Ostrower,** Director, Center for Jobs, Education and Career Training at ABCD

"Job training and English as a Second Language programs are key to linking the development in Midtown to the neighborhoods of Boston. We look forward to working on the implementation of this plan."

## HOUSING

**Bill Moy,** Co-Moderator, Chinatown Neighborhood Council

Affordable housing is a key ingredient to the successful expansion of the Chinatown neighborhood. The Midtown Plan helps to provide the support we need."

**Regina Lee,** Executive Director, Asian Community Development Corporation

"There is a severe shortage of housing in Chinatown and to the extent the Midtown Cultural District Plan can meet some of this shortage, it would have a positive benefit for the Chinatown community."

## PRESERVATION

**Antonia Pollack,** Director, Boston Preservation Alliance

"All in all, it's a major accomplishment in managing growth in this area."

## CULTURAL FACILITIES

**Bruce Marks,** Artistic Director Boston Ballet Company

"In this city of renaissance we are to be given a chance like none other, for to build theatres is to build temples, to build temples is to move closer to God."

**Dona Sommers,** Director, Stagesource

"Space is the most critical need facing performing arts groups in Boston. This is our plan to address those needs."

## CHILD CARE

**Mary Hines,** Co-Chair, Boston Women's Commission

"Quality child care is one of the necessary ingredients to a successful economy. This plan recognizes that fact by providing new child care facilities for the workforce."

## CULTURAL DISTRICT

**Doris Chu,** Director, Chinese Culture Institute

"Opportunity is knocking at the door."

**Councillor Thomas Menino**

"It's a great example of what the community planning process can accomplish. Midtown is good for the City. It's good for everybody."

**Rebecca Hill,** President Boston Afro-American Artists Assoc.

"The Midtown Cultural District will allow all residents of Boston to celebrate our city's multicultural and multiracial heritage through the visual and performing arts."